

# 10 Leisure Walks of Discovery

## A Boot Up

### THE NORTH HAMPSHIRE DOWNS

Robert Wood

The North Hampshire Downs are quintessential chalk downs. The chalk gives rise to a variety of contrasting landforms including broad rolling downland, deep and shallow valleys, high hills, and ridges with steep scarps in places most notably above the Kennet valley in the very north. The downland itself supports a chalky grassland habitat, beneficial for wild flowers and insects as well as arable agriculture.

These walks cover the whole of the North Hampshire Downs, sometimes called the 'Hampshire Highlands'. The village of Hurstbourne Tarrant will certainly serve as the capital of the area and two walks circle it. The views hereabouts are stunning. One walk strays into Berkshire but that is understandable; until 1895 the area was in Hampshire. And another walk strays into Wiltshire but again that is understandable because, on what has been called Hampshire's 'north-west frontier', the three counties are quite jammed together and even meet at a point during one of the walks – at Rockmoor Pond. Remember Fiver and his rabbit pals? Well, one of the walks actually treads on Watership Down.

The ten circular walks, ranging from 3 to 8 miles, suit the needs of families, groups of friends or individuals looking for a gentle stroll or a longer walk, and reflect the many varied facets of the area – its people, its history, and its working landscape and will help first time visitors to experience some of the great scenery the area has to offer. The ten walks are: Vernham Dean and Upton; Linkenholt and Vernham Street; Combe Gibbet and Combe; The Ox Drove and East Woodhay; Hurstbourne Tarrant and Windmill Hill; Hustbourne Tarrant and Bourne Park; Ashmansworth and Crux Easton; Litchfield and the Portway; Hannington and Watership Down; Malshanger and Ibworth.

Halsgrove's new-format guidebook, containing maps, photographs and useful information will ensure a great walking experience. Packed with colour, the book is an ideal reminder of a visit to the area.

#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

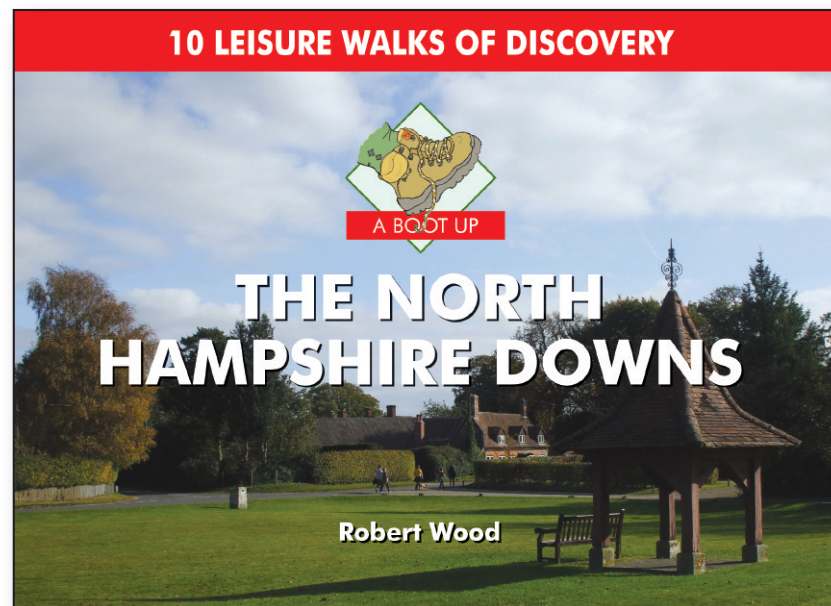
In previous lives Robert Wood was a researcher; an academic and a business psychologist. Now he concentrates on writing walking books. *Walks into History: Hampshire* appeared in 2009. Apart from his technical books, which include a book on emotional intelligence, he has produced a memoir, *Mackem Mayhem*, and three novels - *Pushing Envelopes*, *Chekyll and Ide* and *Ten a Penny*. His previous work for Halsgrove was *A Boot Up the Berkshire Downs*.

#### HALSGROVE CATALOGUE

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Halsgrove House,  
Ryelands Industrial Estate,  
Bagley Road, Wellington,  
Somerset TA21 9PZ  
Tel: 01823 653777  
Fax: 01823 216796  
[www.halsgrove.com](http://www.halsgrove.com)  
e-mail: [sales@halsgrove.com](mailto:sales@halsgrove.com)

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# A BOOT UP THE NORTH HAMPSHIRE DOWNS



Malshanger Tower



D-Day preparation



River Swift running well



Right: Ibtorpe House

**2** Limerick and Verham Street

**7** Opposite is a signpost pointing to Verham Dean. Follow this track downhill (again possibly muddy) and over another track, all the while enjoying the views to the west that are opening up, until you arrive at a track – Church Lane. Go left and before long the buildings of Verham Street will appear over to the left.

**8** Look out for a path that will take you into Verham Street. When you find it proceed over fields towards the houses, crossing a small stile in the far right-hand corner to emerge between two rather attractive dwellings.

**9** Turn right and then left up the road past Fowles Farm.

Further up is Fowles Farm: Flowers - Fowles; just to coincide! The track you want is before that. Look for a sign 'Stone Farm' to the right (it is called 'Stone Dove Farm' on the map).

**10** Once past the farm continue until a track appears on the left that looks as if it is going to Limerick, which indeed it is. Once on the road turn right and return to the car.

**3 Combe Gibbet and Combe**

A gibbet with a sensational tale to tell, the rain-bringing of universal St Swifun, unbeatable views from the balcony of the North Hampshire Downs: all this in a corking five mile walk.

While the gibbet is bound to command instant attention the views won't be far behind, showing views northwards over the wooded Kennet valley and beyond to the Berkshire Downs. And behind you is Woburn Hill, at 974 feet the highest point in Berkshire and the highest chalk hill in England. After passing the gibbet the walk doesn't slightly to visit a pond known to attract a variety of bird life, some of it rare, before turning south to follow the Test Way for a time. It then drops down into the

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**Level:** 100 m  
**Length:** 5 miles  
**Terrain:** Start like up to the gibbet followed by an undulating section and a descent into Combe before the walk culminates in a short steep climb.  
**Park and start:** At Woburn Hill car park to the north of Woburn (OS 2711240)  
**Maps:** OS Explorer 158

village of Combe and its church of St Swifun before climbing back to the balcony.

Example of a double-page spread.



View of the east end of Hurstbourne Tarrant